

Utkalmani Gopabandhu Das

Durga Charan Kuanr



Makers of Indian Literature

MAKERS OF INDIAN LITERATURE

Utkalmani Gopabandhu Das

Durga Charan Kuanr



SAHITYA AKADEMI

Sahitya Akademi
Rabindra Bhavan, 35 Ferozeshah Road, New Delhi 110 001
Sales : Swati, Mandir Marg, New Delhi 110 001
Jeevantara, 23A/44X, Diamond Harbour Road, Calcutta 700 053
Guna Buildings, II Floor, 443-445, Anna Salai, Teynampet,
Chennai 600 018
172 Mumbai Marathi Grantha Sangrahalaya Marg,
Dadar, Mumbai 400 014
Central College Campus, University Library Building,
Dr. Ambedkar Veedhi, Bangalore 560 001

ISBN : 81-260-1101-7

First Published : 2000

Price : Rs 25

Published by the Sahitya Akademi
Typeset by Bingshita, 39/C/2, Satin Sen Sarani, Calcutta 54 and
Printed at ATS Grapho Laser, 17B, Lake View Road, Calcutta 29

Foreword

Utkalmani Pandit Gopabandhu Das is one of the makers of modern Orissa. He was born at a time when Orissa was passing through the most critical period of her history. The people who had built a vast empire, due to strange irony of fate, were even deprived of a homeland of their own. During the British rule Oriya-speaking tracts were thoughtlessly tagged to the neighbouring provinces where the Oriyas were subjected to utter neglect and humiliation. Poverty, flood, famine and pestilence had sapped the life-blood of a proud and prosperous people. During this period of Orissa's miserable plight Utkal Gourab Madhusudan Das and Utkalmani Gopabandhu Das had appeared as saviours of the Oriya people and by their untiring efforts and self-sacrifice had saved an ancient people from total disintegration and decay.

Besides his high stature as a political leader and social worker, Gopabandhu was also a talented poet and writer, and has made significant contribution to the making of Oriya literature. This aspect of his life is often lost sight of in the midst of his much discussed educational, political and social service activities. He was a precocious poet and had started writing poetry quite early in life. Even as a school boy he was dragged into the raging controversy of the time between the supporters of medieval Oriya poetry and modern Oriya poetry and by writing a satirical verse criticising the moderns had incurred the wrath of poet Radhanath Ray who was then the chief exponent of modern Oriya poetry. Most of the early poems of Gopabandhu were written when he was a student in the college at Cuttack. These poems published in an anthology entitled *Abakas Chinta* (Thoughts at Leisure) reveal a highly sensitive and perceptive mind. But being deeply involved in political and social service activities he had gradually distanced himself from the pursuit of the muse. The opportunity came to him again almost two decades later when he was put into jail for long two years as a political prisoner. He utilized the forced leisure to best advantage by producing some excellent

pieces of poetry like 'Bandira Atmakatha' (Autobiography of a Prisoner), 'Kara Kabita' (poems written in prison) and the popular ballad 'Dharmapada' that brought him instant success and established his credentials as a great patriotic and humanistic poet.

Gopabandhu and his compatriots like Pandit Nilakantha Das and Pandit Godavarish Misra of the Satyabadi School had ushered in a new national awakening in Orissa and had given a new turn both to Oriya poetry and prose which in the history of Oriya literature has been termed as the Satyabadi Era. The new trend set by these poets and writers has greatly influenced Oriya literature in subsequent years.

In this monograph a modest attempt has been made to assess the achievements of a person who not only made a significant contribution to the making of Oriya literature but also has left a lasting impression in every sphere of Orissa's public life. His premature death (1877-1928) has been a great loss not only to Orissa's public life, but also an irreparable loss to Oriya literature.

I am greatful to the authorities of the Sahitya Akademi for having given me the opportunity to write this monograph. The English rendering of the poetry passages from Pandit Gopabandhu Das's works given in this book are by the present writer.

D. C. Kuanr

Contents

Gopabandhu and His Times 1

Educational Activities 10

As Legislator and Leader of the National Movement in Orissa 15

As a Poet 23

Contribution to Oriya Prose and Journalism 41

The Last Days 49

A Select Bibliography 54

I
Gopabandhu and His Times

Utkalmani Pandit Gopabandhu Das is one of the makers of modern Orissa. He had dedicated his life to redeem the Oriya people from the quagmire of sufferings and exploitation into which they had fallen in the worst days of their existence as an ancient people. He along with Utkal Gourab Madhusudan Das had spearheaded the national renaissance in Orissa that took place in the last part of the 19th and the first part of the 20th century and had infused a sense of dignity and pride into their fellowmen who had almost forgotten their own identity. Gopabandhu's selfless service to the flood and famine affected people of Orissa has become a living legend and his name has become a household word among the Oriya-speaking people.

This selfabnegating leader and great patriot was born at Suando, a small village in the Sakhigopal police station of Puri district, on 9th October 1877. At that time the Oriyas did not have a province of their own. A proud and prosperous people who in their halcyon days had built up an empire that extended from the Ganga to the Godabari, and at times reached the banks of river Cauvery in further south, by strange irony of fate, were even deprived of a homeland. The British rulers having no regard for the linguistic, social and cultural homogeneity of an ancient people, in the name of administrative convenience, had tagged Oriya-speaking tracts to the neighbouring provinces of Madras, the Central Provinces and Bengal. The Oriya people in these neighbouring provinces lived in abject poverty and utter neglect. They were even denied the facility of primary education in their own mother tongue. The condition of the coastal districts of Cuttack, Puri and Balasore that constituted the Cuttack Division under the Government of Bengal, was no better. Little attention was paid to the spread of education, industry, communication, health services and other developmental activities. The Oriyas had no say in their own administration as

the government jobs were almost monopolised by outsiders who exploited the people of Orissa without scruples. Even doctors, lawyers, teachers, etc., were from outside as they had the good fortune of getting facilites of modern education earlier. Added to this deplorable situation, recurrent floods, drought and famine had sapped the life blood of the Oriyas. Being driven by poverty thousands of them had migrated to the industrial cities like Calcutta and Jamshedpur, to the tea gardens of Assam and the rice fields of Burma to work as labourers. The feudatory states of Orissa which formed almost two-third of Orissa's geographical area were under the Ruling Chiefs and remained utterly backward. The harrowing Orissa famine of 1866, known as 'Na Anka Durbhikhya', just eleven years before the birth of Gopabandhu, in which lakhs of people died like fleas due to starvation, exposed utter neglect and callousness of British administration in Orissa.

Against this bleak background of Orissa's unhappy plight the highly intelligent and sensitive child Gopabandhu was growing up in an obscure hamlet in Puri district. His father Daityari Das was a Muktear at Puri and was influential in the area, but his family life was not happy. As his first wife died without an issue, Daityari married for the second time. Soon after giving birth to a son Narayan, the second wife also expired. Gopabandhu was the son of Daityari's third wife Swarnamayee Devi. But Swarnamayee Devi died too after a few days of Gopabandhu's birth. Gopabandhu was deprived of his mother's love, the pangs of which have found touching expression in some of his poems. Gopabandhu was brought up with loving care by his paternal aunt Kamala Devi who was living in the family being widowed at a very early age. Gopabandhu started his early education in the village *pathasala* where the old fashioned pedagogue imparted teaching to young pupils in the old traditional method like Oliver Goldsmith's village school-master in his famous poem 'The Deserted Village'. In those days the spread of modern education in Orissa was still in its infancy and very few villages had the good fortune of having a government primary school. For giving better education to his children Gopabandhu's father Daityari Das had

set up an upper primary school in the village and his two sons : Narayan and Gopabandhu joined the school. Gopabandhu was a precocious child and soon made his mark in the school. Narayan did not fare well and discontinued his studies after sometime. But Gopabandhu had deep love and regards for his elder brother all through his life.

Gopabandhu came of an orthodox Brahmin family and was deeply religious. It seems, he imbibed the religious sensibility as a family heritage and was very much devoted to the family deity Radhabinode Bihari. He used to recite Jagannath Das's Bhagabat before the family deity with great devotion. The 16th century saint-poet Jagannath Das's free rendering of the Sanskrit Bhagabat into Oriya in simple language and metre is held sacred in every Oriya home. The deep spirituality of the Bhagabat Purana left a lasting impression on the mind of young Gopabandhu and in future life he often quoted lines from Jagannath Das's Bhagabat in his speeches and writings to prove a point.

As in those days early marriage was the custom in the Brahmin society Gopabandhu's father got him married to a young girl Moti Devi when he was barely twelve years of age, though consumation took place years later. After completing his upper primary school education Gopabandhu joined the Middle Vernacular school at Rupadeipur, situated at a distance of about 8 km. from his village. Gopabandhu had a thorough grounding in Oriya language at his vernacular school which helped him in his literary activities in future. After passing Middle Vernacular examination he joined Puri Zilla school. As he had not studied English at the Middle Vernacular stage he had to join a class lower, but soon he made up for the loss and was given a double promotion.

Wider exposure during his school days at Puri gradually brought out the innate qualities of patriotism, social service, leadership and literary talent in him. He was a fine orator and made his mark in debating societies and group discussions. During this time he came in close contact with Muktear Rama Chandra Das, an influential person of Puri, who also happened

to be his local guardian. Rama Chandra Das's simple living, patriotism, social sevice and spirit of self sacrifice had inspired young Gopabandhu to dedicate his life to the service of the country and the people. He had organized the Puri Seva Samiti to render humanitarian service to the large number of pilgrims who congregated at Puri during the famous car festival as well as other festivals of Lord Jagannath and were often victims of cholera and other epidemic diseases. Gopabandhu's chief companion in these social service activities was Harihar Das, a few years junior to him at the school. This companionship between the two continued throughout their life. Harihar Das had later distinguished himself as a teacher of the famous Satyabadi Grove school founded by Gopabandhu and was well-known in Orissa as Acharya Harihara, the veteran Gandhian and Sarvodaya leader.

During the school days of Gopabandhu at Puri there were two interesting incidents which proved his courage of conviction and leadership qualities. The first incident was related to Gopabandhu's literary activity. At that time there was a raging controversy between the supporters of traditional Oriya poetry the chief exponent of which was the medieval Oriya poet Kavi Samrat Upendra Bhanja, and the supporters of modern Oriya poetry represented by poet Radhanath Ray. Two contemporary literary periodicals, Indradhanu (the Rainbow) and Bijuli (The Lightning) supported the cause of the former and the latter respectively. Gopabandhu being a supporter of the traditional school of poetry had published a satirical poem against the moderns represented by poet Radhanath Ray who also happened to be the Inspector of schools and had thereby incurred his wrath. He was deprived of his scholarship and also the prizes due to him that year. But Gopabandhu had no regrets. Even as a school boy he had displayed uncommon courage of conviction. Later a new school of nationalistic literature flourished under the inspiration and leadership of Pandit Gopabandhu Das which is known as the Satyabadi school of literature. It gave a new turn to Oriya poetry which is considered to be a protest against the trend set by poet Radhanath Ray. The other incident was about

Puri Civil Surgeon's case. Once there was virulent attack of cholera at Puri during the car festival in which the Puri Seva Samiti organized by Gopabandhu rendered yeoman's service within its limited capacity, but the local medical and public health authorities were totaly callous towards the problem as a result of which hundreds of pilgrims died. Dibakar Das, a friend of Gopabandhu, had published a report in the Statesman and other newspapers about criminal negligence of the local health authorities which made the government officers of Puri uneasy. The british Civil Surgeon Charles Beck got angry with Dibakar and caned him in the public which had infuriated the students as well as the general public of Puri. Sensing that the Civil Surgeon's life was in danger Gopabandhu had to intervene. Being a pacifist he persuaded the agitated people to file a case in the court of the magistrate against the Civil Surgeon instead of taking law into their own hands. Ultimately the Civil Surgeon had to apologize for his improper conduct. Thus the honour of the Indians was vindicated in the face of the all-powerful Europeans who looked down upon the people they ruled.

After passing the Matriculation examination in 1899 Gopabandhu joined the Ravenshaw College, Cuttack, for higher studies. During this time the death of his father Daityari Das came as a great shock to him. Entrusting the family affairs to his elder brother Narayan, Gopabandhu devoted himself to his studies and social service activities. He led an austere life and was usually clad in a handwoven *dhoti* and a *chadar*. Plain living and high thinking was the motto of his life. His pleasing manners, spirit of self sacrifice, eloquence and organizing ability had made him the natural leader of students. He had orgnized a volunteer corps and collected funds for distribution of relief among the flood affected people and for rendering assistance to the poor and needy students. During this period he had come in close contact with his devoted companions like Pandit Nilakantha Das, Acharya Harihar Das and a few others who had vowed together to dedicate their life to the service of the people. Later Pandit Krupasindhu Misra, Pandit Godavarish Misra and Pandit Lingaraj Misra had joined this group and in later life all of them had

distinguished themselves in their respective spheres in Orissa's public life.

Amalgamation of the Oriya-speaking areas that remained scattered in the neighbouring provinces was a major problem of the day that was agitating Oriya mind. Gopabandhu came in close contact with Madhusudan Das, the famous Oriya lawyer and the undisputed leader of the Oriya people, who had made amalgamation of the Oriya-speaking tracts his life's mission. Gopabandhu had attended the Utkal Sammilani (Utkal Union Conference) held at Parlakhemundi in 1903 as a student leader. Parlakhemundi was then in Ganjam district which formed a part of Madras Presidency. The unification of the Oriya-speaking tracts under one administration was also the life's dream of Gopabandhu and he worked for it in his own way till the end of his life.

Gopabandhu sustained a great personal loss when both his sons died at short intervals while he was still a student in the college. Being a deeply religious man he somehow withstood the shock and resigned everything to the will of God. His wife and two daughters Sarangini and Ketaki were left in the care of his elder brother. Later Sarangini was given in marriage to Ratnakar Pati, who subsequently became professor of Philosophy in Ravenshaw College, Cuttack, and Ketaki married Narayan Misra.

After graduating from Ravenshaw College in 1904, Gopabandhu with the intention of pursuing an independent career went to Calcutta to complete the B. L. course. A new kind of humanitarian activity had awaited him in Calcutta. Being driven by abject poverty caused by recurrent flood and famine thousands of Oriyas had come to the industrial city of Calcutta and were working as labourers mostly in the Jute and Textile mills and some had even taken to menial jobs. They lived in unhealthy conditions and led a miserable life. Being moved by the sufferings of his fellowmen Gopabandhu tried to infuse a sense of dignity and selfconfidence in them. He held meetings and formed societies to unite them so that they could assert themselves and fight to protect their interests. He also organized night schools to educate the illiterate labourers and their

children. A night school founded by him has been named after him and still remains the hub of educational, social and cultural activities of the Oriyas in Calcutta.

Those were the days of great agitation in the country over the partition of Bengal by Viceroy Lord Curzon with a political motive. The agitation had taken a violent turn and the shouts of Vande Mataram rent the air. The partition movement had assumed the form of Swadeshi Movement in the country. People were called upon to boycott foreign goods. Gopabandhu's patriotic spirit was stirred with a burning zeal by this movement and on his return to Orissa after the law examination he collected a band of followers and wearing saffron robes moved from village to village spreading the message of Swadeshi, social reform and political freedom of the country. His chance meeting at Cuttack with Khudiram Bose, the young revolutionary from Midnapur, who had died a martyr's death at the gallows and his association with Sashibhusan Ray Chaudhury, an associate of Khudiram, who was trying to instil revolutionary zeal into patriotic Oriya youths and was giving them training in the use of weapons, had strengthened the determination of Gopabandhu to dedicate himself to free the country from foreign bondage.

As in his scheme for the development of Orissa Gopabandhu had given top priority to the spread of education, he founded a High School at Nilagiri, an ex-feudatory State, and worked as the Headmaster of the school for sometime. His devoted companion Harihar Das had joined the school as second teacher. They tried to build up the school as a model educational institution. While at Nilagiri Gopabandhu got the news of his success in the B. L. examination and the death of his wife almost simultanieously. His wife's death came as a rude shock to him. He was then 28 years of age. He had lost his mother, father, two sons and now wife had left him. No amount of persuasion by friends and relatives could make him agree to marry for the second time. He was made of different stuff. The who man was wedded to humanitarian service, worldly life had little attraction for him. While at Nilagiri Gopabandhu had also carried on his social service activities and as the headmaster of the school had tried

to develop the school on the Gurukula line, but his plans were opposed by Cobden Ramsay, the then Political Agent of Orissa States. Realising that a Native State was not the proper place for his new educational experiment, after a few months he left Nilagiri to start his legal practice at Cuttack.

At Cuttack Gopabandhu served as a junior to eminent lawyers like Madhusudan Das and Gokulananda Chowdhury and had a lucrative practice. But earning money was not the aim of his life. The distressed condition of the people of Orissa was always in his mind. When harrowing tales of devastating flood in Jaipur and Kendrapara areas due to high flood in the rivers Vaitarani, Brahmani and Kharasrota reached his ears he could not sit silent. Collecting funds, food and clothing, with a group of volunteers he proceeded to the flood affected villages for distribution of relief. He had also formed an organization called the Central Young Utkal Association at Cuttack with Mr. R. Shaw, the Principal of Ravenshaw College, as President and himself as General Secretary with a view to promoting youth welfare and for helping the flood affected people. Branches of the Young Utkal Association were formed in different parts of Orissa under direct supervision of Gopabandhu. Recurrent flood and famine had become endemic in Orissa and permanent measures to eliminate this scourge had become imperative. At the Utkal Union Conference held at Puri in 1908, at the instance of Gopabandhu, a resolution was passed to find out permanent solution to the flood problems in Orissa and a committee was set up for the purpose.

For a time Gopabandhu practised as a lawyer at Puri. Like Mahatma Gandhi in South Africa he never accepted a brief from anyone whose cause he did not believe to be just and often persuaded the parties to settle their disputes outside the court. He also continued his social service activities at Puri and was made the Secretary of the Puri Leper Asylum and was nominated as a member of the Municipal Council. He was also made one of the members of the Board of Trustees of the famous Sakhigopal temple situated at a distance of about nineteen kilometres from Puri. During this time a suggestion came from Utkal Gourab Madhusudan Das for his appointment as the State Pleader of

Mayurbhanj Feudatory State. The then Maharaja of Mayurbhanj Sri Rama Chandra Bhanja Deo was a benevolent ruler and was the first President of the Utkal Union conference held at Cuttack in 1903. He accepted the job and was in Mayurbhanj from 1909 till 1912 as the State Pleader as well as a member of the State Council. The Maharaja was greatly pleased with his sense of duty, honesty and integrity and took his counsel in important State matters. While in Mayurbhanj Gopabandhu kept close contact with the student community and had established a branch of the Young Utkal Association at Baripada. Debating and other cultural activities were organized among the students in which close associates of Gopabandhu like Pandit Nilakantha Das, Pandit Godavarish Misra and Pandit Krupasindhu Misra, who were then students of Calcutta University, often participated. Gopabandhu had also established an orphange at Baripada and helped poor and needy students from his own pocket. As Maharaja Sri Ram Chandra Bhanja Deo passed away in 1912, the State went under the Court of Wards. Though Gopabandhu was offered the post of a Munsiff he declined the offer and left Mayurbhanj to resume his legal practice at Cuttack, and then at Puri.

II
Educational Activities

Gopabandhu had realised that without the spread of education Orissa's lot could not be improved. He also knew that poor Orissa could not afford expensive buildings, furniture and other ostentatious apparatus for establishing an educational institution. His idea was to train up patriotic and disciplined youngmen who will lead the country in future. Plain living and high thinking was the motto of his life and he himself was an embodiment of this ideal. From his student days Gopabandhu was very much impressed by the new educational experiment started at Poona by the nationalist leader Gopal Krishna Gokhle who had founded the Deccan Education Society and was running the Fergusson College with a band of highly educated youngmen who were working on a paltry salary. For spread of education in Orissa Gopabandhu founded the Universal Education League and made a modest beginning by establishing a Middle English School in 1909 in the sylvan setting of Sakhigopal to train young students on the Gurukula line. High School classes were started when Pandit Nilakantha Das after obtaining M.A. degree from the Calcutta University joined the school as Headmaster. Subsequently Pandit Godavarish Misra and Pandit Krupasindhu Misra who were post-graduate degree holders joined the school. Besides them, some other dedicated teachers like Harihar Das were also on the staff. These highly qualified teachers being inspired by Gopabandhu's idealism and self-sacrifice worked in the school on mere subsistence allowance. Classes were held in the open air under the shady grove of *Bakul* and *Chhuriana*. Instruction was imparted through work and play. Manual labour was encouraged and occupational training was given to the students in crafts and agriculture to enable them to earn their livelihood independently in future. Games and athletics were introduced and much stress was given on physical fitness. The students led a simple and austere life in the hostel under strict

supervision of the Headmaster and the Superintendent Harihar Das who was called Acharya. This appellation Acharya had stuck to the name of Harihar Das and in future he became famous in Orissa as Acharya Harihar, the veteran Gandhite and Bhoodan leader. There was no caste restriction in the school hostel and all the students dined together irrespective of caste and creed. Gopabandhu, though deeply religious, was against superstitious belief and social taboos. He himself had adopted an untouchable boy and had given him higher education and this was much before Gandhiji started his Harijan movement in the country. To bring about allround social reform was one of the aims of the Satyabadi school. The Brahmins in those days did not sport mustache.To dispel this social taboo Pandit Nilakantha Das sported moustache and some other young Brahmins followed suit. Sakhigopal, where the grove school was founded, is surrounded by a number of Brahmin villages known as *sasans*. The orthodox Brahmins of these villages were terribly upset with the community dining in the school hostel and other unorthodox ways followed in the school. Some miscreants set fire to the thatched house of the school in 1912 which caused heavy financial loss to the institution and destroyed many valuable books collected for the school library. Gopabandhu who was then the State Pleader of Mayurbhanj soon came to Satyabadi hearing the sad news of arson, but was not perturbed by the incident. The school had already earnad wide reputation as a model school and students were coming from all parts of Orissa being attracted by its lofty ideals and highly qualified devoted teachers. Funds were soon collected and two rows of brick houses were constructed which were later converted to hostels when permanent school building was constructed. Gopabandhu helped the institution not only with his labour but with his money as well. His idea was to establish such institutions in different parts of Orissa.

The Satyabadi school had become a centre of Orissa's literary and cultural renaissance. Pandit Gopabandhu Das, Pandit Nilakantha Das and Pandit Godavarish Misra had created a new wave in Oriya literature which had given a new turn to Oriya

poetry and prose. Pandit Krupasindhu Misra through his historical research had brought to light the past glories of Orissa and had thereby created a new national awakening. Educational tours to places of historical importance were organized by the school in which all the students and teachers participated and they were received enroute by admiring villagers with love and warm hospitality. During such an excursion to the famous sun temple at Konarka, Pandit Nilakantha Das got the inspiration to write his famous poem *Konarke* and kavya *Mayadevi*.

The Satyabadi school was affiliated to the Calcutta University and when Bihar and Orissa was separated from Bengal it was affiliated to Patna University. At the initial stage there was some difficulty in getting affiliation as the government had suspected that the teachers of the school were spreading sedition among the students and the people around. The patriotic and nationalistic spirit that permeated the institution and the highly qualified teachers working in the school for a pittance had given rise to such suspicion. The University authorities had made the acceptance of government aid a precondition for affiliation which at first Gopabandhu had refused to accept lest it might infringe the autonomy and independence of the institution. This was also another reason for the delay in getting University affiliation.

The Satyabadi school which was the brain-child of Pandit Gopabandhu Das, while making a novel experiment in education had also become the centre of Orissa's national aspirations. The institution was highly praised by eminent persons like Mahatma Gandhi, Sir Asutosh Mukherjee, the Vice-Chancellor of Calcutta University; Sir Edward Gait, the Lieutenant Governor of Bihar and Orissa, and many other celebrities like Fakir Mohan Senapati, the father of modern Oriya literature. Mahatma Gandhi who came to Orissa in 1921 had also visited Satyabadi school and was very much impressed by its activities. He wrote in *Young India* in its issue of 13th April 1921 : 'Pandit Gopabandhu has an open-air school in Sakhigopal, twelve miles from this side of Puri. It is a grove school. It is worthy of visit. I passed a most delightful day in the midst of the boys and their teachers. It is a serious experiment in open-air teaching. Some of the boys are

powerful athletes.' Sir Asutosh Mukherjee, the reputed Vice-Chancellor of Calcutta University who visited Satyabadi school in 1917 had remarked, 'The school possesses many remarkable features. It is managed by well-educated Oriyas who have realised the great truth that spread of education amongst their people can be effected on the surest and soundest lines by persons who are prepared to make great sacrifice... The promoters of this school have set a laudable example to the country. Their ideals are high, they understand the value of discipline and culture— mental, moral and physical; the result of their labour is likely to be great for the very reason that the beginnings are humble, one cannot but wish that every village in Bengal should possess a genuine plan of instruction like the Satyabadi school'.

When Gopabandhu plunged into the national movement launched by Mahatma Gandhi to free the country from foreign bondage, in pursuance of his programme of Free National Education, Gopabandhu converted his favourite Satyabadi school into a National school in 1921 and refused to accept financial aid from the University as it was controlled by the government. He founded the Utkal Swaraj Siksha Parisad and opened national schools in Orissa as well as in other outlying Oriya-speaking tracts. Pandit Godavarish Misra had been sent as the Headmaster of the Oriya school at Chakradharpur in the Singhbhum District of Bihar and Pandit Nilakantha Das was sent to open a national school at Sambalpur as its Headmaster. Though Satyabadi school was converted into a National College for sometime it gradually languished due to financial difficulties. Circumstances had compelled the institution to accept government aid, and Gopabandhu sticking to his principle distanced himself from the institution. Thus ended a glorious chapter in the history of educational experiment in Orissa which had anticipated Rabindranath Tagore's experiment in Santiniketan, and Mahatma Gandhi's concept of Nai Talim or Basic Education.

From among the illustrious teachers of the Satyabadi school hisrorian Pandit Krupasindhu Misra had a premature death. Others like Pandit Nilakantha, Pandit Godavarish and Acharya

Harihar had joined Gandhiji's non-cooperation movement and had distinguished themselves as political leaders, legislators, scholars, litterateurs and social workers. The generation of students who had passed out from the Satyabadi school were marked out in there different spheres of activity for the noble legacy of patriotism, discipline and sterling character that they had imbibed from their Alma Mater.

III
As Legislator and Leader of the National Movement in Orissa

After being separated from Bengal, Bihar and Orissa formed a province in 1912 and was administered by a Leiutenant Governor with a Legislative Council in which there were some elected members known as additional members. When Utkal Gourab Madhusudan Das suggested to Gopabandhu to seek election to Bihar and Orissa Legislative Council, as a private member, he was not inclined to accept the offer as he had bitter experience of the indifferent attitude of the British Government towards public opinion and people's grievances. But it was difficult for Gopabandhu to decline the offer made by Madhusudan Das who was then the undisputed leader of the Oriya people and for whom Gopabandhu had high regards.

Gopabandhu contested for the lone seat allotted to Orissa and was elected. He gave up legal practice and concentrated his attention to legislative work. He served as a member of the Council from 1917 to 1920 during which period he fought for the amalgamation of the Oriya-speaking tracts lying scattered in the neighbouring provinces, pleaded for the right of the people of the coastal areas of Orissa to manufacture salt for their own consumption and tried for the spread of education in Orissa on the model of Satyabadi open-air school. Salt is an essential commodity of domestic consumption and the people of coastal Orissa, from remote past, were manufacturing salt for their own use. With the imposition of government control and excise duty people were deprived of this natural right of theirs. Gopabandhu had moved a resolution on the floor of the Bihar and Orissa Legislative Council for permiting the people to manufacture salt for their own personal use. Though initially government had taken a sympathetic attitude towards the problem, the matter had ended there as at the end of the First World War in 1918, salt

continued to be imported from Liverpool and government control over salt manufacture was more tightened. Gopabandhu had taken up the cause of the people for free manufacture of salt years before Gandhiji started his famous salt Satyagraha in 1930. As a result of the Gandhi-Irwin Pact of 1931, the coastal people of Orissa were allowed free manufacture of salt for their own consumption.

There was a terrible famine in Puri district in 1919 and Gopabandhu had strained every nerve in alleviating the sufferings of the flood affected people by distribution of relief. He had pleaded in Bihar and Orissa Legislative Council to declare famine in Puri district and apply the famine code for relief. While narrating the harrowing tales of sufferings of the flood-stricken people his eyes were filled with tears. He resented the callousness of Mr. Grunning, the then Divisional Commissioner of Orissa, towards peoples' distress and said, 'Declare famine or not but save the human lives there. If any human being in an unknown corner of the province, within the great empire of his Majesty, dies for want of food, I think that his blood will be upon me and upon all those who are directly or indirectly responsible for conducting the administration.' Gopabandhu was a powerful orator and effective legislator. The Lieutenant Governor Sir Edward Gait was very much impressed by the fervent appeal of Gopabandhu and being accompanied by him personally visited the flood affected areas of Puri district and admitted the inadequacy of government relief measures with the words, 'What ought to have been done has not been done'. As recurrent flood and famine were problems of life and death for the people of Orissa Gopabandhu fought in the council for permanent flood-control measures as a result of which a Flood Enquiry Committee was appointed in 1922-23. Later a Flood Expert Committee was formed to find out a permanent solution to the flood problem in Orissa and on their recommendations the Hirakud Dam on river Mahanadi was constructed which to a great extent has controlled the flood havoc in Orissa. After joining Mahatma Gandhi's non-cooperation movement Gopabandhu as a non-cooperator withdrew himself from Bihar and Orissa Legislative Council and thus ended his brief but effective career as a legislator.

Gopabandhu had evinced keen interest in national politics and attended the sessions of Indian National Congress held at different places. He attended the special session of the Congress held on 4 September, 1920 at Calcutta under the presidentship of Lala Lajpat Rai in which Mahatma Gandhi's programme of non-cooperation was formally accepted. In the same year in the month of December the annual session of the National Congress was held at Nagpur on a grand scale and it marked the transformation of the Congress as a mass organization. Gopabandhu had attended the session as the leader of a delegation from Orissa. At this session the Congress had accepted the programme of formation of linguistic provinces and a resolution was passed to that effect in which Gopabandhu had taken a prominent part. On his return from Nagpur Gopabandhu attended a session of the Utkal Union Conference held at Chakradharpur in the Singbhum disrtict of Bihar on 30th December and wanted the Utkal Union Conference to join the Indian National Congress by merging into it. As the Congress had accepted the programme of formation of linguistic provinces he did not find any reason why the Utkal Union Conference should not join the national main stream. But as a section of the Utkal Union Conference preferred to fight for their goal as a separate entity through constitutional process of making prayers and appeals to the British authorities as they had been doing before, painfully Gopabandhu distanced himself from the Utkal Union Conference with which he was closely associated from his student days and also had presided over its annual session held at Cuttack in 1919. Formation of a separate province for the Oriyas was the life's dream of Gopabandhu and he worked for it in his own way, but he did not live to see its formation in 1936, though a truncated one, as vast Oriya-speaking areas still remained outside the newly formed province.

After returning from Nagpur session of the National Congress Gopabandhu formed the Orissa Provincial Congress Committee with himself as the President and he continued in that capacity till his death in 1928. As a non-cooperator he resigned from his membership of the Bihar and Orissa Legislative Council, and giving up legal practice he fully devoted himself in spreading the

message of Mahatma Gandhi's non-cooperation through the length and breadth of Orissa. District and subdivisional Congress Committees were formed. Gopabandhu had got Singbhum Disrtict Congress Committee affiliated to Orissa Pradesh Congress Committee. Gram Panchayats were revived to look after village welfare and to settle village disputes. Gopabandhu had organized volunteer crops, had appealed to the people to use Khadi and swadeshi goods only and to use spinning wheels in every home. Mahatma Gandhi's programme of prohibition was carried out and people were advised to give up liquor. Volunteers picketed liquor shops in which young boys known as Banar Sena (Monkey Brigade) also enthusiastically took part without caring for police oppression. Gopabandhu had also laid stress on cooperative movement and had established cooperative societies in the villages.

On the invitation of Gopabandhu, Mahatma Gandhi had visited Orissa in 1921 and had addressed mass meetings at Cuttack, Puri, Bhadrak and Berhmapur which had given great fillip to the non-cooperation movement in Orissa. Gopabandhu had accompanied Mahatma Gandhi to all these meetings and with his eloquence had inspired the people to join the non-cooperation movement in large numbers. The huge mass meeting held on the sands of Kathajodi river at Cuttack still remains in living memory. At the call of Mahatma Gandhi many students had left their schools and colleges and many doctors and lawyers their professions. Prominent future leaders of Orissa like Dr. Harekrushna Mahatab, Nabakrushna Chowdhury, Nityananda Kanangow, Jadumani Mangaraj and others had discontinued their studies to join the non-cooperation movement. Gopàbandhu Chowdhury who later distinguished himself as a prominent Gandhite and Sarboday leader had also resigned from his government job as Deputy Collector to join the national movement. In pursuance with Gandhiji's programme of national education Pandit Gopabandhu Das had converted his favourite Satyabadi school into a national school and had founded such institutions in different parts of Orissa as well as in outlying Oriya-speaking areas. For spreading Gandhiji's message of non-

cooperation among the masses Gopabandhu published a weekly newspaper, the *Samaj*, from Satyabadi in 1919. It was priced at one pice so that a poor villager could also buy and read it. The *Samaj* played a prominent part in spreading the message of non-cooperation in the remote corners of Orissa.

British authorities gradually became more and more hostile towards the political activities of Gopabandhu and clamped prohibitary orders under section 144 wherever he went to attend meetings or to address the public. At that time the atrocities committed by the Raja of Kanika on the tenants of his Zamindari had created a sensation in Orissa. The Raja had imposed several kinds of taxes on the people and was extorting them with inhuman suppression. The people of Kanika Zamindary revolted against the Raja's oppression and stopped paying taxes. The Raja who was then the Executive Councillor of the Lieutenant Governor of Bihar and Orissa, with government support let loose a reign of terror. People's houses were burnt, women were molested and there was firing in which many were killed and many more injured. Gopabandhu had given wide publicity to the atrocities perpetrated by the Raja of Kanika in his newspaper the *Samaj* for which he had incurred the Raja's ire. When as the president of Orissa Provincial Congress Committee he arrived at Bhadrak to make a study of Kanika situation, section 144 was impossed on him. In spite of the gaging order Gopabandhu addressed the local political workers in a closed door meeting and returned to Satyabadi. The government was seeking for an opportunity to restrain the political activities of Gopabandhu by putting him into jail. He was arrested under the Criminal Law Amendment Act for organizing Swaraj Volunteer Corps and also for violating the prohibitary order imposed on him under section 144 at Bhadrak. He was tried under these charges in 1922 and was sentenced to two years simple imprisonment. After being lodged in Cuttack jail for a few months he was transferred to the Hazaribagh jail in Bihar. During this long period of incarceration Gopabandhu had resumed his literary activities and had produced some fine pieces of poetry that have given him a permanent place in Oriya literature.

In spite of his multifarious social, educational, political and literary activities the poor plight of the villagers who were helpless victims of recurrent flood, famine and all sorts of exploitation, was uppermost in the mind of Gopabandhu. He hailed from a village and was well-aware of the problems of the villagers. He knew that Orissa lived in the villages and without improving the lot of the villagers no prosperity of Orissa could be contemplated. He had devoted himself to the spread of education in the rural areas and had established village cooperatives and had revived village Panchayats so that the people could unitedly work for allround development of the village and settle village disputes without going to the law court. The propagation of Congress ideals among the villagers had instilled in them the spirit of patriotism, self-reliance and urge for country's freedom. The weekly newspaper *Samaj* published by him had carried Mahatma Gandhi's message of non-cooperation and freedom struggle to every nook and corner of Orissa.

Whenever people were in distress due to flood and famine Gopabandhu with a batch of devoted volunteers always rushed to them to provide immediate relief. Food, clothing, and medicines were distributed wherever needed. Financial assistance was given to those whose houses were destroyed by flood. He also established spinning, handweaving and paddy-husking centres to provide employment to the flood affected people. As huge funds were needed for these relief works Gopabandhu with other social workers had to approach people for donations. In 1922 Gopabandhu accompanied by Pandit Lingaraj Misra had paid a visit to Bombay as guests of the Servants of India Society and held meetings impressing upon the people there about the distressed conditions of Orissa due to recurrent floods and famine. Rich donations came forth from different quarters, particularly from the industrial and commercial houses. Mahatma Gandhi during his tour of Orissa in 1921 was very much pained seeing the poverty and sufferings of the people and had published an account of Orissa's flood and famine conditions in his *Young India*. At his instance Rev. C.F.

Andrews and A.V. Thakkar had come to Orissa to assist Gopabandhu in his flood and famine relief work. Rev. Andrews had also given wide publicity to the flood and famine conditions of Orissa in different newspapers of the country. So, funds were coming in from different quarters for relief work in Orissa. Lala Lajpat Rai of the Punjab had also arranged funds for Orissa's flood relief and had sent Mohanlal to work in the flood-affected areas. For rendering selfless service to the poor and the distressed people Rev. Andrews was known in Orissa as Dinabandhu (friend of the poor) Andrews and Sri Thakkar was affectionately addressed by the people as Thakkar Bapa. A lifelong friendship had developed between Gopabandhu and these two noble souls.

After the flood and famine conditions of 1925 and 1926, there was unprecedented flood devastation in Orissa in 1927. The rivers Baitarani, Brahmani, Kharasrota, Budhabalanga and Subarnarekha were in spate and submerged most parts of the Bhadrak and the Balasore subdivisions of the coastal district of Balasore and the coastal subdivisions of Jaipur and Kendrapara of the Cuttack district. Now each of these subdivisions has been formed a separate district. The flood was so severe that Lord Irwin who was scheduled to visit Orissa at that time had to cancel his programme as his special train could not come due to dislocation of railway communication. The Viceroy had sent a message of sympathy to the affected people through the Governor of Bihar and Orissa. The matter was also discussed in the Central Legislative Assembly and a resolution was passed expressing sympathy to the sufferings of the people affected by unprecedented floods in Gujarat, Orissa and Sind. A copy of the resolution was sent to Pandit Gopabandhu Das in his capacity as the President of the Orissa Provincial Congress Committee. Gopabandhu while conveying the grateful thanks of the flood-affected people to the Assembly had also mentioned, 'Orissa demands permanent measures against flood havocs'.

On the 12 August 1927, the Orissa Flood Relief Committee was formed in a public meeting at Cuttack and Gopabandhu was appointed General Secretary of the Committee. The Committee made an appeal for donations and money flowed in from different

quarters. When flood water began to recede Gopabandhu with batches of volunteers rushed to the affected villages for distribution of relief. Gratuitous relief was given and necessary medical aid was provided. Financial help was given to people whose houses were damaged by flood. Gopabandhu at times risking his life moved from village to village in the flooded area to supervise relief operations. His name was well-known through the length and breadth of Orissa and people adored him for his piety and selfless service. His noble presence and a word of sympathy were of great solace to the people in their time of distress. Gopabandhu was not satisfied only in alleviating the sufferings of the people through flood and famine relief measures. With a view to find out permanent solution to the flood problem in Orissa, an All Orissa Flood Conference was convened at Cuttack and similar coferences were held at every disrtict and police station level. On demands of the people the Government of Bihar and Orissa had set up a Flood Expert Committee to recommend permanent measures for flood control in Orissa. Subsequently other expert committees were formed and on their recommendations the Hirakud Dam on Mahanadi, the major river in Orissa, was costructed.

Gopabandhu was also a great social reformer. Though born in an orthodox Brahmin family, from his young age he was against all kinds of superstitious belief and social taboos. He was against untouchability and students of all castes and creeds were admitted to the Sakhigopal school founded by him and they lived and dined together in the school hostel. Gopabandhu had also adopted an untouchable boy. He supported widow marriage and encouraged young men to marry young widows. At Puri he had established a widow home, the 'Jagannath Ashram' in 1926 and widows irrespective of caste and creed were housed in it. To keep the widows engaged and also to provide some employment to them they were given training in various crafts.

IV
As a Poet

Besides his high stature as a political leader and social worker, Gopabandhu was also a poet and writer of distinction and has made significant contribution to the making of Oriya literature. This aspect of his life is often less discussed compared to his much publicised political, educational and social service activities. He was a precocious poet and started writing poetry quite early in life. Even as a school boy he was dragged to the literary controversy of the period by publishing a satirical verse on Radhanath Ray, the most influential poet of the time, and had incurred his displeasure. Some of his early poems have been published under the title *Abakas Chinta* (Thoughts at Leisure) which reveals a highly sensitive and perceptive mind. The beautiful vignettes of Orissa's countryside with its hills, dales, lakes, rivers and verdant bowers resounding with the song of cuckoobird find expression in these poems with a remarkable charm and simplicity. There is an intimate tone about some of these poems that at once arrests one's attention. In the poem Bhargabi Prati (To River Bhargabi), while addressing to river Bhargabi that flows by the side of his village, he writes :

To narrate your many attributes
What power have I in me,
But a deep love and regard
That I have always for you, O river!
I have not seen my mother's face
Nor have I sucked from my mother breast,
Being kind, you have saved me as a child
By feeding me with your water, O river!
I have played much on your sand,
My childhood pranks you have borne with patience,
I shall remember all these till my death, O river!

The village river Bhargabi has become the mother-surrogate for the poet who had lost his mother in childhood. Gopabandhu was a great lover of nature. His poems like 'Kathajodi Tire Sayamkala' (Evening on Kathjuri Bank), 'Kokila' (The Cuckoo), 'Chandra' (The Moon), 'Bhargabi Prati' (To River Bhargabi), 'Eka Asra Barsara Abyabahitapare Naraj Darsan' (Seeing Naraj After a Shower), 'Rail Upare Chilika Darsan' (Seeing Chilka from the Train), or 'Grisme Thunta Gachha' (Bare Tree in Summer) bear ample testimony to the poet's genuine love for nature. Seeing Chilka from the Railway Train is one of his fine nature poems :

Tarry a while, O steam-propelled carriage
I will enjoy the beauty of picturesque Chilka.
It seems to me as a picture, no reality,
Could such beauty be possible in the real world?
The blue waves move slowly
As if seen in a dream;
Flocks of birds swim on its surface
And when they make a vault in the air
Their reflections make them appear as twins.
When they rise into the air making great noise
The Ckilka sky is crowded with hundreds of birds.
Before the charming sight appears to be real
It disappears in the twinkling of an eye,
The cruel train carries me afar
And the intervening trees and hills create obstructions;
They hide for a while and then bring to sight
Dear images as if appearing in the dream.
At places Chilka appears blue, at places looks deep green,
At places it looks gray, and appears white at some other places,
By appearing in different colours at different places
Your vast stretch of water, O Chilka! creates great mystery.

* * *

Poor me! I am no thinker
Still I don't know why incessantly

My heart craves for the beauties of nature.
So, I had thought to come to your shore one day
And enjoy in solitude your panoramic beauty,
But being preoccupied with work I had preserved that
thought in my mind.
After a long time that opportune moment had come
But alas! could I avail of it.

The panoramic charms of blue-watered Chilka was a permanent source of joy to Gopabandhu as beauties of nature were to the great nature-poet William Wordsworth. Whenever he was in vacant or in pensive mood the beauties of Chilka flashed upon his inward eye and filled his mind with unalloyed joy. Chilka, situated on the eastern sea-coast of Orissa, a few kilometres away from Puri, also provided an outlet for overseas trade of Orissa in the glorious days of yore. The sight of Chilka also brings to the mind of the poet thoughts about Orissa's ancient glory and her present day decadence.

Where is that fortune, where are those noble deeds?
Holy Utkal, alas! how distorted she is,
Sacred Nilachala, the abode of Aryan religion
Has lost all her religious vigour and is bereft of noble
deeds.
The faces of the people have lost their old religious glow,
And their heart is bereft of the peace born of religious
merit,
And their life has lost its sacred vigour and enthusiasm,
Alas! what misfortune has overtaken Utkal.
Where are those Oriya sailing ships?
Where are those resounding songs of the sailors?
Do they sail across the seas?
Where have gone the old glory and the wealth?
They still live in legends
And the wives of the traders still worship the boats.
Hard and rocky is your beautiful shore, O Chilka!
And is girdled with impenetrable hills.
Wives of the traders gave birth to the brave sons of Utkal

Whom they nursed with great love and care.
Those hills and forests are still there
Still exist your strong and rocky shores,
But alas! where is that heroism?
And where is that Oriya nationalism?

Most of the beautiful nature poems of Gopabandhu were written in his youth when he was still a student in the college at Cuttack. His nature poems are usually related to human life and like William Wordsworth he looked upon nature as a friend, philosopher and guide. He has nicely related nature to human life in the following lines taken from his poem 'Kathajodi Tire Sayamkala' (Evening on the Banks of River Kathajodi) :

The sun now goes down in the west
And the western sky is tinged red.
The golden rays of the sunset
Being reflected on the cloud, look beautiful.
Reflexion of the golden rays on the dark cloud
What wonderous hue has it created!
Like that the influence of a noble soul
Creates its likeness in others.
The body of a small man is sanctified
By coming in contact with the shadow of a noble man;
The companionship of a virtuous soul even for a moment
Makes the evils of the world disappear.

But man by his foolishness forgets the benign influence of nature by submitting himself to evil propensities. In his poem 'Kahtajodi Tire Chandraloka Nisitha' (Moonlit Night on the Banks of Kathajodi) the poet writes :

I know that God has established
A beautiful relationship between man and nature,
But man in his foolishness always tries
To cut off that relationship.
Being victims to evil propensities
They kill the virtuous qualities in them.

Gopabandhu's nature poems are not a mere tapestry of beautiful vignettes of nature. Like most of his poems they have a deep undertone of spirituality and patriotism. He was a great admirer of Ariyan culture and the ascetic life of the ancient sages of India and had made new experiments in education in his Satyabadi Open-air School on ancient Gurukula line. His own life is a saga of self sacrifice, patriotism, ascetic living and humanitarian service. His love for ancient Ariyan way of life has been beautifully expressed in the following lines of 'Kathajodi Tire Chandraloka Nisitha' :

Blessed are the early Ariyans who lived on agriculture
And sang the simple hymns of the basic principles.
They perceived in lifeless matter, mighty power
The Supreme energy, the primordial cause.
If I were born at that time
Gladly I would have served at the feet of nature,
And unravelling Nature's outward appearance
Could have perceived through wisdom's eye
Divine love, truth eternal,
And the endless longing in me would have been satisfied.

Gopabandhu was deeply religious but his religious belief had no narrowness about it. Like the ancient saints of India he always thought of the wellbeing of entire mankind. In a poem written in his young age and included in the poetry collection *Abakas Chinta* (Thoughts at Leisure) while addressing to the assembled students of the Brahman Samiti Chhatrabas of Puri, he had expressed his thoughts on Hinduism as follows :

A Hindu is not born for his own happiness,
Every drop of his blood is meant for universal good.
Prove this in your own life
And spread the message among all other castes,
We all are the children of one God
And shall work for universal good avoiding self-pride.

Humanism is the very basis of Gopabandhu's religious ethos and finds recurrent expression in many of his poems.

Gopabandhu was born at a time when Orissa's fortune was at its lowest ebb. A proud people who once built a vast empire, were even deprived of a home-province. There was little development in the Oriya-speaking areas that were tagged to the neighbouring provinces and Orissa had become a fertile ground for exploitation by outsiders. Being driven by abject poverty caused by frequent flood and famine, thousands of Oriyas had gone away to distant places to earn their livelihood as labourers. This miserable plight of his fellowmen had created great reaction in the sensitive mind of Gopabandhu which find touching expression in many of his poems. 'Biinsa Satabdira Prathama Dina Barabati Darsan' (A visit to Barabati on the first day of the twentieth century) is one such poem. The ruined fort of Barabati still stands in the city of Cuttack as a mute witness of Orissa's ancient glory and military might. From the 11th to the 16th century the mighty rulers of the Ganga and the Suryavamsi dynasties ruled the farflung Orissan empire from this fort strategically situated between two rivers— the Mahanadi and its branch the Kathajodi. The fort retained some of its pristine glory till the British conquest of Orissa in 1803 and after that the walls of the fort and its magnificent buildings were thoughtlessly pulled down by the vandalism of the British rulers. The sight of this ruined fort which once stood as a symbol of Orissa's national glory fills the mind of Gopabandhu with deep sorrow :

> The inner yards of which were the playground of the
> heroes,
> Now dogs and jackals roar there,
> Big buildings like blessed mountains
> Had raised their head into the clouds,
> And their proud and majestic look
> Created tremor in enemy's heart,
> Now heart bursts with sorrow
> Seeing mounds of earth in their place.
> What was once a deep moat
> Tender crops have now raised their heads in it.
> Where is that thundering sound of the cannons
> Which once deafened the ears of the enemy.

Where are those war drums that thrilled the marrow of
the heroes?
And where are those invincible elephants and horses?
O Time! You have swallowed everything
And glorious Utkal is now wretched and poor.

In some other poems included in his poetry anthology *Abakas Chinta* the poet has also recalled the glories of ancient Utkal and has expressed his sorrow at her present day degeneration and decay. In one such poem 'Prarthana' (Prayer) he writes :

When I think of the past glory of Utkal
Her great wealth, strength and courage,
And behold her present day misfortune
Who with flesh and blood will not be upset
Seeing this sorry state of the mother.
Those rivers, hills and forts are still there
But where is that glory of yore?
Those embankments and temples still exist
But where are those skilled hands
That built these great monuments?
Emptiness gapes everywhere,
Where is that virtue, where has gone that strength?
Great poetic works are there, but no poets,
The old country is there, but its beauty is gone.
Time has consumed what was best
And what was beautiful has been destroyed.
What a great misfortune indeed!
I humbly pray, O Lord of the universe
Save Utkal from this disaster.

These musings of Gopabandhu about the past glory of Utkal and his expression of sorrow at her present misfortune recalls to mind the poetry of George Seferis, the first Greek to win Nobel prize for literature in 1963. The downfall of Greece from its high pedestal as the ancient torchbearer of western civilization filled the mind of Seferis with great anguish which find touching expression in many of his verses.

Gopabandhu has written poems paying glowing tribute to the great sons of Utkal like the saint-poets Jagannath Das, Balaram Das; the epic poet Sarala Das who wrote Oriya Mahabharata in the 15th century, the great medieval poet Upendra Bhanja, the great astronomer Mahamahopadhyay Samanta Chandrasekhar, and the famous monarchs of independent Orissa like Anangabhima Dev and Purusottam Dev which express his patriotic spirit and abiding love for Orissa. But Gopabandhu's patriotism had nothing parochial about it. His concern for the suffering people of Orissa was a part of his greater concern for mankind. In the poem 'Bandira Atmakatha' (Autobiography of a Prisoner) that Gopabandhu wrote while in the prison as a political prisoner, he says :

Let love for their country and love of mankind
Be the creed of the people of Utkal,
Sitting calm and quiet in the prison
This is my prayer at the feet of the Lord.

The same sense of universality and pan-Indian thought are expressed in many of his poems. Mahatma Gandhi after his tour of Orissa in 1921 had said, 'Orissa is the epitome of India's poverty.' Gopabandhu viewed his service to the poor and downtrodden people of Orissa as service to humanity and wanted the people of Orissa to come up and join the national mainstream. In his poem 'Prarthana' (Prayer) he says :

In the bitter battle of the world
O Lord let not the poor children of Utkal lag behind,
Let the stream of Utkal mingle
With the great national flow of India.

Gopabandhu held Jagannath, the Lord of the Universe, of Nilachal (Puri) in great veneration. The cult of Jagannath is a cosmopolitan one and admits of no caste restriction. Jagannath is equally adorded by different religious sects and even had Muslim devotees. The Muslim poet Salbeg composed some devotional songs in honour of Jagannath which are still popular.

The cosmopolitan Jagannath cult has influenced Orissa's social and religious life to a very great extent, a glimpse of which can be obtained from the following lines from Gopabandhu's poem 'Bandira Atmakatha'. Gopabandhu had brought Orissa to the main stream of Indian politics and was the founder-President of the Orissa Provincial Congress Committee. Though he had devoted himself to the freedom struggle and had suffered for it, for him attainment of the country's freedom was not an end in itself, it was a means for the good of the world.

Let my attention be centred on attaining Swarajya
Self-rule for India is meant for the wellbeing of the world.
Bharat is like a lotus in the world-tank,
And holy Nilachal is like its core.
Wherever I might be in India
I will consider that to be my home.
In my eyes any piece of rock in India
Is as holy as *salagram*,
And any temple is my dear Nilachal.

Gopabandhu was deeply religious, but his religious faith was broad-based and outlook cosmopolitan. It is evident from several of his poems that he always conceived Orissa as a part and parcel of India and his desire for redeeming Orissa and her flood and famine-stricken multitude from abject poverty and degeneration was a part of his broad-based humanism and universal love for mankind. He was a visionary and had his own vision of Orissa's future for the realization of which he had dedicated his life. He worked incessantly for the general uplift of the poor and the downtrodden till the end of his life, but the path of a visionary does not always run smooth. The agonies of a visionary can be traced from the following lines taken from a poem, 'Girisikhe Laya Rakhi Chalibi Mukara' (I shall Walk Keeping an Eye on the Top of the Hill) written in his youth.

At the outset of the journey
I did not know
The road will be so dangerous and long,

Time is passing, the horizon recedes,
The chariot wheel of my mind moves on loose sands.

* * *

My life may come to an end
Anything might happen
The road may be rough and long,
But is there any fool
Who after beholding the divine sight
Will desist from it?
When tired of body
I will take shelter in the shade of the hill
And sleep on sandy bed
After covering half the distance,
Fixing my eyes on the starry hill top
I shall open my heart's door with great joy.

Song of the distant sea
Will fill my ears with divine love,
And pursuing that song
With deep concentration
My life-bird will soar and soar
And will at last perch on the high hill-top.

This journey of the visionary can be compared to the 17th century English poet John Bunyan's allegorical poem the *Pilgrim's Progress* in which the main character Christian makes his pilgrimage through hills and dales and passing through various hurdles finally reaches the celestial city.

Most of the poems written by Gopabandhu in his youth were collected and published in the anthology *Abakas Chinta* (Thoughts at Leisure) which also contains some other fine pieces like 'Mo Nani' (My Aunt), 'Anatha Kalika' (The Helpless Bud), 'Pathika' (The Wayfarer) and a few others. In the first poem the poet has expressed his gratitude to the paternal aunt who had brought him up as his mother had died after giving birth to him, and the second poem 'Helpless Bud' is about the sorrows and sufferings of a child widow. In the third poem the poet has made

a touching reference to his departed wife whose memory gives him courage and solace in the lonely and arduous journey of life. For Gopabandhu even any small object was a good enough subject for writing poetry. His one such poem is 'Grisme Thunta Gachha' (The Bare Tree in Summer). In this poem he has depicted nature as a teacher having benign influence on man:

When I think of your former beauty
This appearance of yours brings tears to my eyes.
Man's youth is as transitory
As the sweet smell of flower in bloom,
Even seeing this happen everyday in the world
The youth commits so many evil deeds.
O king of trees! this does not apply to you
And you never commit such heinous act.
By serving many a creature in youth
You have made your birth, O tree! fruitful.
Providing soothing shade and ripe fruits
You have given contentment to many burning souls.
Having devoted your youth to others welfare
Blessed is your life in this world.

Gopabandhu's poetry cannot be separated from his own noble self. His deep spirituality, patriotism and sympathy for suffering humanity find natural and spontaneous expression through his poems. Gopabandhu's hectic political, legislative and social service activities did not provide him any opportunity to pursue the muse for about two decades. Opportunity came when he was sentenced to two years simple imprisonment in 1922 for his political activities. After being lodged in Cuttack jail for a few months he was transferred to distant Hazaribag jail in Bihar. He devoted this long period of incarceration to literary activities and produced some excellent pieces of poetry like 'Bandira Atmakatha' (The Autobiography of a Prisoner), 'Kara Kavita' (Poems written in Prison) and 'Dharmapada' (A ballad on the legendary boy-architect of the Sun Temple at Konarak who had sacrificed his life for the sake of his fellow-architects). He also wrote two other poetry pieces 'Nachiketa Upakhyana' (The story

of Nachiketa) and 'Go Mahatmya' (The greatness of cows) while in the prison.

'Bandira Atmakatha' is a long poem of one hundred and ninety three couplets. It is the soulful and spontaneous expression of diverse thoughts of a patriot and great nationalist leader who had dedicated his life to the service of the poor and the distressed. When Gopabandhu was transferred from Cuttack jail to Hazaribag jail it was very painful for him to leave his dear Orissa. To avoid public notice the British authorities were carrying him by night train to the distant destination and while passing through familiar places where he had worked for the people before, thoughts come crowding to his mind :

The train has reached Jenapur
And the people of Jenapur are known to me.
I had come here two years back
When Jenapur was submerged in water.
Many villages, houses and much wealth
Were destroyed by flood.
Flood water was gushing through village streets
And tears were rolling down many eyes.
Men, women and cattle
Were dying due to starvation.
Remembering the conditions of those days
My heart is still filled with anguish.
When I think of the miserable plight of Utkal
Caused by flood, my heart sinks with sorrow.
In a moment I visualise
From lake Chilka in the south to river Subarnarekha in the north,
And in the twinkling of an eye I recollect
The sufferings of the people that I have seen.
Famine is the constant companion of flood
And one closely follows the other.
Suffering the onslaughts of recurrent flood and famine,
Many villages of Utkal have been devastated.
So many villages and houses have been deserted
And stretches of cornfields have been sandcast.

People are downcast with despair
And many die without a morsel of food.

Gopabandhu is also pained to think how flood, famine and exploitation have reduced a prosperous people to beggary.

The Mallas (strong-bodied men) who were once the
soldiers of Utkal,
The Paiks (foot soldires) and Pradhans (village headmen)
Have now taken to begging.
They have been reduced to skeletons with no flesh
And cannot stand erect due to starvation.
Whatever they earn with the sweat of their brow
The cruel money-lender, the village police
And the blood-sucking zamindars take away all
beating them black and blue.
The maidens of Utkal have become destitutes
Without food and a piece of cloth to cover their body,
And youth never blooms in them.

When the train carrying him reached Bhadrak railway station he was reminded of the agitation of the Kanika tenants against the oppressive rule of their Zaminder. Gopabandhu had supported the cause of the tenants and had given wide publicity to the atrocities committed by the Raja on them for which he had incurred the Raja's ire. When as the President of the Provincial Congress Committee he had gone to Bhadrak on his way to Kanika, prohibitary order under section 144 was clamped on him. Later in connivance with the British Government the Raja of Kanika had got him arrested on charges of violation of the prohibitary order and on some other charges and he was sentenced to two years simple imprisonment. Gopabandhu has ironically stated in the poem that due to the kindness of the Raja of Kanika he had the honour of his first political imprisonment. Bhadrak has a substantial Muslim population for which Gopabandhu has made a fervent appeal for maintaining communal harmony :

Forget all mental differences
And honour the Vedas and the Koran equally.
The Hindus, Muslims, Buddhists, Christians
The Sikhs and the Jains are all the children of India.
Of all the religions, castes and races
Mother India is the root.
All have the same aspirations and the same aim,
And all are born and will die on the same soil.
All will work at the same mother's feet
And should remain one in all weal and woe.
Let unity be your sole motto
And that is the way to attain Swarajya.

Gopabandhu was the most trusted Lieutenant of Gandhiji in Orissa and had carried his message of non-cooperation all over the Oriya-speaking region. As he was imprisoned for long two years, he was apprehensive that in his absence the non-cooperation movement might slow down due to the lack of a leader. So, through the lines of this poem he has appealed to the people not to lose heart and carry on the movement :

Give up the unholy foreign clothes,
Hand-spun thread is required in the holy *havan* for
attaining self-rule.
Sanctify your body with hand-woven cloth
And don't involve yourself in litigation.
The five village elders are the supreme deities
Re-establish them in the villages.
All be united and obey them
And the strength of the village will revive again.
The trap of false litigation will no more be there
And the miscreants will not eat away your village money.

The famous oftquoted lines of Gopabandhu's self-sacrifice for the cause of the country's freedom also appears in this poem :

Let my body mingle with the dust of this land
And my countrymen tread on it.
Let my flesh and bones fill the holes

That lay on the road to Swaraj.
Let the people progress even a step on freedom's way
By the sacrifice of my life.

It is no wonder that this long poem with its soulful outpouring of a noble soul who loved the country and its people more than his own life created a stir in the minds of the people when it was serialised in the columns of the weekly Samaj while Gopabandhu was still in the prison. The intimate tone of the poem and its deep spirituality and patriotism expressed through simple flowing language and metre have raised it to the height of great poetry. The poem has gone through several editions which is a sure indication of its wide popularity.

'Kara Kavita' (Poems written in Prison) is a collection of poems that Gopabandhu wrote while in incarceration and contains some beautiful poetic pieces. In 'Bandira Swadesha Chinta' (The Thoughts of a Prisoner of his Homeland), a long poem included in this collection, the poet is in a nostalgic mood and invokes southern wind blowing across Orissa towards Hazaribag to tell him about his dear country and the people. The poem contains some beautiful descriptions of the natural beauties of Orissa's countryside, the Chilka Lake, Puri, Satyabadi, the temple city of Bhubaneswar, the hilly regions of north-western Orissa and other places. The planning of the poem reminds one of Kalidasa's *Meghaduta*. In the following lines the poet has expressed his grief over the ruins of Orissa's architectural and sculptural glory :

The all consuming time is devouring
The artistic skills of Orissa,
Beholding the skeletons of artistic glory, O wind!
You must have been greatly pained at heart.
Many wonderful temples have been razed to the ground
And the fallen stones from many temples have created stone mounds.
Many stone images that marked the culmination of artistic excellence
Are disfigured with broken faces and hands.

Some lay on roads or in jungles
Or are used as stones at bathing ghats.

The long ballad-poem 'Dharmapada' narrates the story of the legendary character Dharmapada, the boy-architect of the Sun Temple at Konarak, who had sacrificed his life to save the life of the fellow-architects who were threatened with life punishment by king Narasimha Dev I, the builder of the temple, as they had failed to complete the construction of the temple within scheduled time. Due to some error in calculation the architects had failed in setting the crowning member of the temple at the right place and were in a desperate mood. To save the life and honour of the senior and more experienced fellow-architects Dharmapada in the darkness of the night had climbed to the top of the temple and had performed their work by correcting the error and had then sacrificed his life by jumping into river Chandrabhaga flowing nearby. Through the character of Dharmapada the poet has tried to impress upon the readers the nobleness of self-sacrifice for the good of many.

In the preface to the poem 'Dharmapada' the poet has made some observations about his ardent desire from young years to be a poet and how he had made some early attempts in this direction. But being distracted by the turn of events that dream of his could not be realised. During his long period of incarceration often he had to spend sleepless nights in a solitary room as his mind was agitated by so many thoughts and the poem Dharmapada is one of the products of those desultory thoughts.

'Bramhatattwa Ba Nachiketa Upakhyana' (Brahmatattwa or the story of Nanchiketa) and 'Go-Mahatmya' (Greatness of the Cow) are two other poetical works that Gopabandhu wrote while in the prison. In the story of Nachiketa while narrating the story of the Upanishadic character Nachiketa the poet has delved deep into the Upanishadic speculations on the nature of the Bramha or the Supreme Being. The intricate philosophical concepts of the Upanishads have been expressed in this poem in a simple and lucid manner that even an average reader can understand.

This reminds one of the simple poetic style and language of Jagannath Das's Oriya Bhagabat of which Gopabandhu was a great admirer. While in the prison Gopabandhu had also utilized the time in studying sacred Hindu texts like the Sanskrit Mahabharata and the Bhagabad Gita. In the style, presentation and subject matter of 'Go-Mahatmya' the influence of the Hindu Puranas in clearly discernible. The utility of the cow for humankind cannot be overesitmated and the poet in his 'Go-Mahatmya' has focused on the welfare of the cattle population.

Gopabandhu had given a new turn to Oriya poetry by differing from his illustrious predecessors, the romantic poet Radhanath Ray and the devotional poet Madhusudan Rao not only in poetic theme, but also in poetic diction and style. Though both Radhanath and Madhusudan had deviated from the ornate poetic style of the medieval Oriya poets, their language was still Sanskritised to a considerable extent. Gopabandhu did not believe in the dictum Art for Art's sake. For him poetry was a means to communicate his thoughts and feelings to the average reader for which he wrote in a language that was nearer to common speech and preferred to use familiar traditional poetic metre. The 16th century saint-poet Jagnnath Das's Oriya Bhagabat written in simple language and metre seems to have influenced Gopabandhu's poetic slyle to a great extent. Most of his poems have been written in rhyming couplets and in some he has made use of Jagnnath Das's nine-lettered lines. For Gopabandhu the inner contents of the poem are more important than outward embellishment. In the poem 'Kavita' (Poetry) while invoking poetry he writes :

> Pure simplicity is your outward apparel
> And noble thoughts and feelings fill your inner core,
> Common people are enchanted by your outward form
> But the learned are absorbed in your inner contents.

In his youth Gopabandhu also wrote some beautiful sonnets like 'Kama' (Cupid), 'Mo Nani' (My Aunt), 'Eka Asara Barsara Abyabahita Pare Naraj Darshana' (Visit to Naraj after a Shower of Rain) and 'Chhabis Barsa Prabesha' (On Entering Twentysixth

Year of Age), and a few odes like 'Bhargabi Prati' (To River Bhargabi), 'Kokila' (To the Cuckoo) and 'Katakara Silasetu' (The Stone Embakment of Cuttack). Gopabandhu tried his hand in writing 'Go-Mahatmya' (Greatness of the Cow) in the traditional Puranic form that suited the subject matter and was successful to a great extent.

Poet Radhanath Ray in spite of his poetic excellence has been subject to criticism for borrowing the stories of most of his poems from foreign sources and by giving them a local colour has often distored Orissa's history. The nationalist poets of the Satyabadi group represented by Pandit Gopabandhu Das, Pandit Nilakantha Das and Pandit Godavarish Misra had strongly reacted to this trend set by poet Radhanath Ray and had written poetry using stories from Orissa's history and legends. Gopabandhu's 'Dharmapada', Nilakantha's 'Kharavela', 'Konarke' and 'Mayadevi' and Godavarish's lyrical ballads, plays and novels like 'Atharasa Satara' (1817) are all based on local history and legends. In spite of their individual differences as poets, they have in common the nationalistic sentiments of resurgent Orissa that have grouped them together. Both in poetry and prose they had ushered in a new era in Oriya literature which is known as the Satyabadi Era. This group of Satyabadi poets and writers had a great influence on the subsequent development of Oriya poetry and prose.

V
Contribution to Oriya Prose and Journalism

With a view to developing Oriya literature Gopabandhu had brought out a literary magazine the 'Satyabadi' in 1915 under his editorship. At first the magazine was being published from Berhampur (then in Ganjam district, Madras Presidency) with Sashibhushan Rath as its manager, but when Gopabandhu established his own Satyabadi Press at Satyabadi it continued to be published from this press. The magazine maintained a high literary standard and published literary criticism, discussions on education and students' welfare and encouraged publication of literary, political, philosophical, historical, and original creative essays. Gopabandhu took keen interest in education and had set apart a special section in which he discussed about his own ideas and ideals of education and advocated for the spread of education in Orissa's countryside on the models of his Satyabadi open-air-school. His main stress was on character building of the students by infusing into them the spirit of patrotism, discipline and a sense of simple living and high thinking. He was not in favour of expensive buildings and equipments for establishing a school. For poor Orissa it was neither feasible nor desirable. According to him the climatic condition of this country was quite suitable for open-air schools under shady groves which was also preferable on health grounds. Gopabandhu had great admiration for the early Ariyan culture and was in favour of reviving the Gurukula system of education with modern ramifications. While promoting mental faculties of the young students he also stressed upon their physical fitness. He pleaded to make mother-tongue the medium of instruction at all the stages of education so that the difference between the so-called educated and uneducated, the high-brow and the low-brow could be removed to a great extent. Gopabandhu mostly wrote for the students' section of the

Satyabadi and discussed on various problems relating to education, the students, educational institutions and teachers. His simple but forceful language and persuasive style made a great impact on the readers.

Village uplift was one of the main concerns of Gopabandhu. No other leader in Orissa had paid so much attention for ameliorating the sufferings of the poor and distressed villagers as Gopabandhu did. Often risking his own life he was always by the side of the flood and famine stricken villagers with immediate relief. His noble heart melted with pity and sympathy and tears rolled down his eyes seeing the starving villagers who had lost their home and hearth due to flood and were reduced to skeletons. In the special section set apart in the Satyabadi for discussions on village problems Gopabandhu suggested various measures for allround development of the villages. He gave importance to the establishment of village industries, village cooperative societies, generation of income through hand-spinning and hand-weaving, spread of education and improvement of village sanitation, and revival of the Gram Panchayats that will look after allround development of the village. He also grieved for many a village talent withering away unknown and unsung due to lack of opportunity.

'Satyabadi' monthly magazine encouraged literary criticism and had published noted literary critic Pandit Nilakantha Das's famous articles on poet Upendra Bhanja's popular *kavya Labanyabati* and the novels of Fakir Mohan Senapati, the chief architect of Oriya fiction. The scholarly treatises *Odiya Sabdatattwa Sandarva* (Treatises on Oriya Etymology) by Pandit Gopinath Nanda Sharma were published in this magazine. Other noted writers who contributed essays to the Satyabadi were Prof. Ratnakar Pati, Pandit Krupasindhu Misra, Pandit Lingaraj Misra and Pandit Godavarish Misra. Gopabandhu encouraged historical research and published scholarly historical articles written by Pandit Krupasindhu Misra, Jagabandhu Singh and Birupakha Kar. Some portions of Fakir Mohan Senapati's famous autobiography was also published in the 'Satyabadi'. Gopabandhu was a great social reformer and some of his writings

on social reform and that of Pandit Nilakantha Das appeared in this magazine. Gopabandhu's long article on the evils of dowry system—'Bibahare Arthaprasanga' was serialised in the reputed contemporary Oriya periodical 'Mukura' edited by the veteran nationalist leader Brajasundar Das.

Gopabandhu had his own views on literature which he discussed in the pages of the 'Satyabadi'. He was against elitist literature. According to him literature should be rich and elevating in content, but needs to be expressed in simple language and style so that the benefits of literature could infiltrate into the common reader. Unless literature satisfied this primary condition it could not claim to be national literature. For him language and style in literature were just a means to communicate one's ideas and feelings to the readers, but were not an end in themselves. He himself followed this dictum and wrote both prose and poetry in simple language and style that were rich in contents and could reach the common reader.

The Satyabadi school founded by Pandit Gopabandhu had, in fact, become the centre of resurgent Orissa. With the advent of the British when other parts of the country like Bengal, Madras and Bombay Presidencies had made rapid strides in education, industry, communication, and in the development of a national culture, the large number of Oriya-speaking people on the eastern sea-coast of India were suffering from an identity crisis as they were deprived of a home-province. The establishment of the Utkal Sammilani or the Utkal Union Conference by Utkal Gaurab Madhusudan Das in 1903 for amalgamating the Oriya-speaking areas under one administration had awakened a new national conciousness among the Oriyas which is amply reflected in the literature written during this period. In the writings of the 'Satyabadi' group of poets and writers like Pandit Gopabandhu Das, Pandit Nilakantha Das, Pandit Godavarish Misra, Pandit Krupasindhu Misra and in the monthly literary magazine the 'Satyabadi' which had become their mouthpiece the national aspirations of the Oriyas have found their best literary expression. The 'Satyabadi' periodical put more stress on prose writings and within its short existence of only six years had made substantial

contribution to the development of Oriya prose and had made it a convenient medium for scholarly treatises as well as popular articles. After Gopabandhu launched his weekly newspaper the 'Samaj' and paid more and more attention to political and social service activities the publication of 'Satyabadi' was stopped.

In his political, legislative and social service activities Gopabandhu was feeling the necessity of a newspaper that could effectively place the grievances of the people before the government and also inform the people about government activities. Educating public opinion, particularly that of the rural folk was uppermost in his mind. But for launching a newspaper he did not have sufficient funds. Besides, being involved in various public activities he had little time at his disposal to devote to the publication of a newspaper. At his instance Sashibhusan Rath of Berhampur (then in the Ganjam district, Madras Presidency) brought out the Oriya newspaper 'Asha' (Hope) in 1913, in which Gopabandhu often wrote the editorials and published news and views till he launched his own Oriya weekly newspaper the 'Samaj' (society) in 1919.

By buying an old hand-press from Puri, Gopabandhu founded the Satyabadi Press at Satyabadi and brought the 'Samaj' under his editorship. The first issue of the paper came out on 4 October, 1919 on the auspicious day of Dasahara. Though prior to the publication of the 'Samaj', Oriya weeklies like the Utkal Dipika published from Cuttack under the editorship of Gourisankar Ray and the 'Sambalpur Hiteisini' published from Western Orissa under the editorship of Nilamani Vidyaratna had laid the foundation of Oriya journalism, Gopabandhu's 'Samaj' with its strong nationalistic outlook, free and fearless journalism and simple, lucid and forceful prose style marked a new phase of journalism in Orissa. While old newspapers like the 'Utkal Dipika' and the 'Sambalpur Hiteisini' are long since defunct, the 'Samaj' which became a daily newspaper after the death of Gopabandhu in 1928, still, to a great extent, continues Gopabandhu's tradition and is now the highest circulated Oriya daily in the state.

The Satyabadi Press first started functioning in a thatched house at Satyabadi. During his public service activities in the

Singbhum District of Bihar Gopabandhu had come in contact with a bright youngman Radhanath Rath who being influenced by Gopabandhu's high ideals and spirit of self-sacrifice gave up his government service and joined the Satyabadi Press as its manager and the supervisor of the newspaper . Thus began Sri Rath's long association with the 'Samaj' till the end of his life and he was the moving spirit behind the future improvement of the newspaper .

The aims and objectives of the 'Samaj' were enunciated in its third issue as follows : 'The Samaj is published in every week on Saturday from Satyabadi Press. The situation of the country is discussed in it. It particularly ventilates the grievances of the rural people and dispassionate discussion is made of those problems of the people which the.Government ought to know. Again the Government policy and activity are also explained to the people through its columns. Special attention is paid to the problems of health, primary education, religion, Gram Panchayat, Cooperative movement, social conditions, agriculture, rural industries and allied matters of the rural people. The language of the 'Samaj' is easy and simple and it is easily intelligible to the literate people. Even the illiterate people also can understand it if some one reads it out to them'. Initially the weekly was priced at one pice per copy and the annual subscription was fixed at Rs.1.50, so that a poor man in the remote corner of Orissa could afford to buy it. Later the price was slight increased with the increase in the size and print area of the paper, During the absence of Gopabandhu from Satyabadi his close associates like Pandit Nilakantha Das and Pandit Krupasindhu Misra supervised the publication of the paper. The 'Samaj' like the Satyabadi school and the literary periodical the 'Satyabadi' was the product of Gopabandhu's idealistic and nationalistic dreams. When the 'Samaj' was being published from the Satyabadi the students who were inspired by the high ideals and spirit of self-sacrifice of Gopabandhu had also extended their helping hand and enthusiastically volunteered to do some odd jobs for the newspaper. But in 1925 Gopabandhu decided to shift the Satyabadi Press to Puri and the 'Samaj' was published from there

till 1927. Realising the growing importance and popularity of the paper he finally shifted the publication of the 'Samaj' to Cuttack which was then the capital city of Orissa, and still continues to be the cultural and commercial centre of the State. After Gopabandhu plunged into national politics and became the Founder-President of the Utkal Provincial Congress Committee he made the 'Samaj' his chief vehicle for spreading the message of Gandhiji's non-cooperation movement through the length and breadth of the Oriya-speaking areas. With a view to educating public opinion he wrote long editorials which were more to enlighten than to pontificate, to inform than to direct and were written in simple, elegant and persuasive language which tradition the 'Samaj' still follows. Like Mahatma Gandhi, Gopabandhu followed the economic policy of Swadeshi and simple living. He encouraged hand-spinning and hand-weaving for generating income and was against machines which replaced men in employment. He advocated the establishment of village industries, village cooperatives, revival of Gram Panchayats and spread of education, particularly in the rural areas. His concern for the flood and famine stricken people of Orissa was not only confined to distribution of relief. He demanded for permanent flood control measures, construction of drainage channels for reducing water-logging; exemption of Chowkidari tax, land cess, union tax, school fees and to provide Taccavi loan in the flood affected areas. As a social reformer he also used the pages of the 'Samaj' to plead against dowry-system, early marriage and addiction to opium, ganja and wine and ostentatious expenditure on festivities. Gopabandhu led a simple and austere life and lived throughout his life like a rural poor.

Gopabandhu was a lover of truth and as the editor of the newspaper he never compromised with the dignity and honour of his position. He was fully aware of his responsibilities as an editor and published news and views without fear or favour for which he had incurred the wrath of the British authorities and was dragged to the Law Court for more than once. A news was published in the 'Samaj' about the alleged molestation of a woman in a market place by two police Constables in Begunia Police

Station of Puri district, but later doubting the authenticity of the information Gopabandhu had published a contradiction in the columns of the 'Samaj'. But the British authorities who were seeking for an opportunity to put him into jail for his political activities had started a case of defamation against him. Though he was honourably acquitted by the trying magistrate Suresh Chandra Bose, the elder brother of Netaji Subas Chandra Bose, he had to spend about one month in jail as an undertrial prisoner. The second case related to the publication of news about the atrocities perpetrated by the Raja of Kanika on the tenants of his Zamindari who had revolted against the imposition of illegal taxes on them. This had infuriated the Raja who, in connivance with the British authorities had him sentenced to two years imprisonment for violation of the prohibitory orders issued under Section 144 Cr. P. C. As a non-cooperater Gopabandhu did not defend himself as he had boycotted the British court and the case was decreed *exparte*. Gopabandhu had a high sense of editorial responsibility and did not submit to illegal pressure from the government. In May, 1928 a news item dealing with police oppression in Parikud of Puri district was published in the 'Samaj'. The police authorities demanded to know the name of the correspondent so that proceedings could be instituted against him. But true to high editorial morality Gopabandhu refused to divulge the name of the correspondent. Being enraged the police searched the office of the 'Samaj' and started prosecution against the printer and the publisher who were fined. The editor escaped the punishment as he was dead by the time the sentence was pronounced.

Gopabandhu's genuine concern for the suffering people of Orissa for whose uplift he had dedicated his life is reflected in the pages of the 'Samaj' that he edited till the end of his life in 1928. In order to inform and educate the people, particularly the rural folk, he wrote in simple and idiomatic Oriya that was easily understood by the common folk. The new turn that he gave to Oriya journalism has greatly influenced subsequent development of journalism in Orissa. The 'Samaj' has been so popular in Orissa over the years that even today in remote corners of the State for

the common villager the 'Samaj' has become synonymous with newspaper.

The 'Samaj' and Satyabadi Press are managed by a Trust under the Servants of the People Society. Under the stewardship of Padmabhusan Radhanath Rath the 'Samaj' and the Satyabadi Press have made rapid strides. From the thatched house at Satyabadi and the rented building in the old college lane, Cuttack, the Satyabadi Press has now shifted to its own magnificent building complex in Buxibazar. Sri Rath was the President of the Servants of the People Society for about a decade and was the editor of the 'Samaj' for the longest period till his death on 11 February, 1998, at the ripe old age of one hundred and two years. With his death Orissa has lost a veteran journalist and a great public figure. He was the last of the close associates of Utkalmani Gopabandhu Das and with his death the Gopabandhu era has come to an end.

VI
The Last Days

During the days of the unprecedented flood in Orissa in 1927 Gopabandhu had strained every nerve in supervising relief operations in the remote flood-affected villages in the coastal districts of Orissa. He was made the General Secretary of the Orissa Flood Relief Committee that was formed at a public meeting held in Cuttack. He had shifted the 'Samaj' and the Satyabadi Press to Cuttack and had to spend most of his time in the city as the President of the Utkal Pradesh Congress Committee. Cuttack had become the centre of his political, journalistic and social service activities.

Gopabandhu was a great admirer of Lala Lajpat Rai, the Lion of the Punjab, who had founded the Servants of the People Society. Lalaji had come to Puri in 1925 in connection with the establishment of a branch of the Hindu Mahasabha and had stayed as a guest of Gopabandhu and was very much impressed by his piety, self-sacrifice and social service activities. He had suggested to Gopabandhu to join the Servants of the People Society and had assured him that his freedom of opinion and public activities will not be affected by becoming a member of the Society, rather he could carry on his social service activities in a more organized manner under the auspices of an all India organization. On the appeal of Lalaji, Gopabandhu joined the Servants of the People Society as a member in the month of February, 1926, and thus the Lion of the Punjab and the Jewel of Utkal came closer to each other for working jointly for the welfare of the poor and the downtrodden. In the annual session of the Servants of the People Society held at Lahore in 1928 Gopabandhu was elected as the Vice-President of the Society. He had opened an office of the Society at Cuttack and Pandit Lingaraj Misra and some others had joined the Society as members. The Orissa Relief Fund was started under the auspices of the Servants of the People Society and relief work was carried

on in the famine stricken areas of Cuttack and Puri districts. Social reform and labour welfare were dear to Gopabandhu and these were also in the programme of the Society. Gopabandhu worked for the eradication of untouchability and opened literacy centres for the education of the untouchables and formed cooperative societies to help them economically. Gopabandhu was deeply associated with labour welfare work in Calcutta where a large number of Oriya labourers were working in the jute and textile mills under miserable conditions and lived in insanitary surroundings. Even while staying in Calcutta as a Law student Gopabandhu's kind and sympathetic heart was very much aggrieved seeing the miserable plight of his fellowmen and to instill a sense of unity and dignity in them he had organized Oriya associations and had opened night schools for their education. He had also worked for the welfare of the Oriya labourers working at Jamshedpur and other industrial centres. In all these labour welfare activities Pandit Lingaraj Misra was of great help to him. A widow-home named 'Jagannath Ashram' was established by Gopabandhu at Puri to provide shelter to helpless widows. Widows of all castes and creed were admitted into the widow-home and were given training in various crafts for providing employment to them.

At this time Gopabandhu suffered a great personal loss as in 1927 his elder brother Narayan Das passed away. Shouldering all the family responsibilities Narayan Das had given Gopabandhu full liberty to pursue his studies as well as his social service activities. Elder brother's death who was older to him by eight years and was almost like father came as a great shock to him and henceforward it was not possible on his part to spend his whole time at Cuttack. He lived at his favourite place Sakhigopal for some days and occasionally visited his village Suando to look after the family affairs.

Being accompanied by Pandit Lingaraj Misra, Gopabandhu had gone to Lahore in April, 1928 to attend the annual session of the Servants of the People Society and while returning from Lahore he suffered from fever. Pandit Lingaraj looked after him on the way and when they reached Balasore station Gopabandhu

wanted to get down at Balasore to supervise the rebuilding of houses damaged by the flood of 1927, but Pandit Misra did not want to take any risk and took him straight to Sakhigopal. At Sakhigopal it was detected that he had an attack of typhoid, but a few days after recovering from typhoid he proceeded to Calcutta on the invitation of the Oriya Labour Associations there. Gopabandhu was deeply associated with Oriya labour welfare activities in Calcutta and had organized labour associations and night schools for their benefit and could not refuse their earnest request to be with them. He was accorded a grand reception by the Oriyas living in Calcutta and though they had made arrangements for his comfortable stay there he preferred to live with the labourers in very insanitary conditions and was suspected to have contracted malaria. After reaching Satyabadi his condition became worse. It was suspected that typhoid had relapsed. He was also a sufferer from piles. He was attended by the Medical Officer of Satyabadi Dispensary and the Civil Surgeon, Puri, but his condition did not improve. But mentally he was very alert till the end and discharged some of his public responsibilities. He dictated replies to several letters and sent writings to the Samaj. At this time a letter was received from Utkal Gourab Madhusudan Das which carried these poignant words — 'I am anxious for your health. I have grown desperate and may pass away any day. You are the only person with whom I should like to pray in my death-bed. Take care of your health. Orissa is very unfortunate.' But Gopabandhu did not live to pray on the death-bed of Madhusudan Das. Madhusudan lived for six years more to mourn the death of Gopabandhu along with the country. Knowing that his end was near Gopabandhu dicated his last will and testament. He constituted the Samaj and the Satyabadi Press into a Trust and appointed the Servants of the People Society as the Trustee. He also constituted a public trust bequething the family property in the name of the ancestral family deity Radhabinode Behari. His close friends and relatives like Jagabandhu Singh and Banamali Das, the two lawyers from Puri; Pandit Nilakantha Das, Pandit Lingaraj Misra, Acharya Harihar Das, Radhanath Rath, his elder son-in-law Prof. Ratnakar

Pati and others were by the side of his death-bed. Joining them in prayer Gopabandhu breathed his last on 17 June 1928 at 7.25 p.m. when he was only fifty one years of age.

With the death of Gopabandhu one of the brightest stars in the firmament of the country's public life was extinguished. At his premature demise whole Orissa was plunged in deep sorrow and the sad news was flashed in prominent newspapers in India like The Hindu; The Hidustan Times, Delhi; The Tribune, Lahore; The Statesman, Calcutta, The Mahratta, Poona; The Searchlight, Patna; The Swarajya, Madras and many other newspapers. The Hindu paid tributes to him as 'one of Mahatmaji's trusted lieutenants. In his death, Orissa loses an invaluable worker and philanthropist and the country a tried patriot'. While The Tribune described him as the 'uncrowned king of Orissa', The Searchlight wrote about him as 'A patriot among patriots, a courageous soul who knew no fear, with a heart completely in unison with all that is true, noble and good, it may truly be said that throughout the conscious period of his life, Panditji lived and breathed for others and that he died truly a martyr to duty.' The Mahratta observed, 'As the founder of the Satyabadi Society, a member of the Bihar Legislative Council and as a leader of the Non-Cooperation movement, he was known to the people of the province, and the rest of India, as a patriotic and sacrificing son of India'.

Mahatma Gandhi was deeply aggrieved at the death of Gopabandhu and under the caption 'A noble soul gone', he wrote in his 'Young India'. 'Pandit Gopabandhu Das was one of the noblest among the sons of Orissa, the land of sorrows and tears. Gopabandhu babu had given his all to Orissa... The country is the poorer for the death of Pandit Gopabandhu Das. Though he is not in our midst in the flesh, he is in our midst in the spirit'. Lala Lajpat Rai who greatly loved and admired Gopabandhu was shocked at his premature death and wrote in 'The People'— 'The late Pandit Gopabandhu Das of Orissa was literally a prince among men. He was possessed of a deep religious faith of the extreme orthodox type and by his high personal character showed that what helped men to be good and pure was not a

belief in creeds and doctrines but religion lived... He was pre-eminently one who lived as he professed — honest, truthful, frank, guileless, simple and unostentatious. Among his people he wielded an influence which was unique. He was the uncrowned king of Orissa.' Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose on hearing the news of Gopabandhu's death had said, 'Pandit Gopabandhu Das may be regarded as the father of the National Movement in Orissa'. Referring to Gopabandhu's incarceration for two years for fearlessly championing the cause of the poor and the downtrodden people, Subas Bose observed, 'Since his release, Pandit Gopabandhu had been working quietly and unostentatiously for the furtherance of the national cause and for the uplift of Orissa. He loved to work and serve as a recluse and shunned name and fame. Whenever famines and flood appeared in Orissa, the Pandit was to be found at the head of the National Salvation Army of Workers.'

Many other prominent personalities of the country mourned the death of Gopabandhu and sent condolence messages. He has become a living legend in Orissa and his statues have been erected at different places and many public institutions have been named after him. Within the short span of his earthly existence Gopabandhu has left a lasting impression in every walk of Orissa's public life.

Who knows? The country may have to wait for a few centuries to get another worthy son like Pandit Gopabandhu Das.

A Select Bibliography

Pandit Gopabandhu, by Dr. Shriram Chandra Dash (Published by Gopabandhu Sahitya Mandir, Cuttack)

Pandit Gopabandhu (Published by the Satyabadi Press, Cuttack-1, on the occasion of the birth centenary celebration)

Late Utkalmani Pandit Gopabandhu Das, by Sri Radhanath Rath, editor the Samaj (Published by the author, Cuttack-1, 1964)

The Saga of the Land of Jagannath by Dr. Mayadhar Mansimha (Published by J. M. Mohapatra & Co.,Cuttack-2)

Odia Sahityar Itihas, by Dr. Bauribandhu Kar (Published by Kabita Mahal, College Square, Cuttack-3, 1989)

Gopabandhu Rachanabali, Part-I
Compiled by Padmashri Radhamohan Gadanayak and published by Orissa Sahitya Akademi, Bhubaneswar.

Gopabandhu Rachanabali, Part-II
Compiled by Dr. Satyanarayan Rajguru and published by Orissa Sahitya Akademi, Bhubaneswar.

Utkalmani Gopabandhu Das (1877-1928) is one of the makers of modern Orissa. From his early years he had dedicated his life in the service of his suffering fellowmen who were regular victims of flood and famine. He was a powerful orator, effective legislator, great educationist, journalist and as a literateur had given a new turn to Oriya poetry and prose. The people of Orissa who had once built a vast empire were even deprived of a homeland of their own. Alongwith Utkal Gourab Madhusudan Das he had made uttering efforts for the formation of a separate province for the Oriya speaking people which, though a truncated one, came into being in 1936. As an educationist Gopabandhu had established the Satyabadi open-air school at Sakhigopal in the vicinity of Puri on the lines of ancient Gurukula to train up patriotic and disciplined youngmen who were infused with the spirit of plain living and high thinking. He had started a newspaper, the 'Samaj' which is now the widest circulated Oriya daily.

Giving up a lucrative legal profession Gopabandhu had plunged into the freedom struggle under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi and was the most trusted lieutenant of the Mahatma in Orissa. He was the Founder-President of the Utkal Provincial Congress Committee in which capacity he continued till the end of his life. In the later part of his life he had joined the Servants of the People Society founded by Lala Lajpat Ray and was elected its Vice-President. The untimely death of this great patriot and saintly leader of the people was widely mourned by the people of the country.

Durga charan Kuanr (b. 1925) taught English in the Government College of Orissa and is the former State Editor, Orissa Gazetteers. He is a distinguished poet, writer and critic in Oriya.

ISBN 81-260-1101-7

Price Rs. 25